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AUTHOR Tafoya, Terry
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ABSTRACT

Four pre-service orientation exercises utilize both cognitive and affective approaches to foster positive attitudes and self-awareness among staff members working with Alaska Native students. While designed specifically for the Nome (Alaska) Public School Title VII program, the terminology could be readjusted easily to meet the needs of many American Indian, Asian American, Mexican American, or other bilingual and/or ethnic group programs. Plans for each activity detail objectives, time required, appropriate setting and participants, materials needed, and procedures. Exercise I creates interaction between Natives and non-Natives on a non-threatening level by requiring identification of Native language words for food. Exercise II develops awareness of hidden stereotypes by taking participants on a fantasy bus ride. Exercise III focuses on awareness of overt stereotypes through listing and discussing stereotypes of two participant groups. Exercise IV allows English-speaking participants to experience Native language problems in a bilingual setting. (NEC)

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What You Say After Hello: Pre-Service Orientation for Native Programs

Terry Tafoya, Northwest Institute for Native Education
Seattle, Washington

1981

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Pre-Service Orientation is always written into every program's workplan, but when it comes to implementing the orientation for Native American programs with specific activities for participants, most people draw a blank. Unfortunately, the orientation usually concludes with having introduced staff and a brief show-and-tell of whatever resources are on hand.

In my nearly ten years as a teacher-trainer in the area of Native and bilingual education, I have found that much more needs to be done, particularly in dealing with attitude and self-awareness of how staff-members feel about working with Indian and Native students. Even when the staff is mostly Native themselves, there is no guarantee that they will be sensitive and knowlegeable about the local community, especially if they are from other tribes. Fitting in smoothly can take a very long time, and misunderstandings can increase the time necessary to be accepted by parents and students.

For that reason I have created a format that I have found useful and effective in getting participants to a point of being ready to work in a Native program. This specific set of excercises was done for the Nome Public School Title VII program, which serves Inupiat and Siberian Yu'pik speakers. For that reason, the references are addressed to Skimo and Alaskan Natives, however, the activities are all those used originally with Indian groups, and can be easily readjusted in terminology of food and cultural group to

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meet your specific need. In other words, instead of using "muk-tuk" as part of the food group of the first excercise, which would be appropriate for Nome, use "Piki" if you are in Arizona and you're working with Hopi staff. When referring to the "Eskimo" during the Fantasy Bus Ride Excercise, simply substitute "Indian," but make certain you follow all the other specifics in the excercise.

I have also used this same format in working with desegregation efforts of the Seattle Public Schools addressed not only to Indians, but to the central ethnic groups of Asian-Americans, Blacks, and Chicanos, substituting Chinese as the language of the Bilingual Excercise, or team-teaching in Chinese and my own Native language.

If you hve any questions concerning the orientation, or the "Ethnic Awareness Presentation," that would follow this introduction, feel free to contact me. I can be reached at: Northwest Institute for Native Education, 4062 Ninth Aven. N.E., Seattle, Washington, 98105 (206) 362-9094.

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Orientation: Warm Up-Excercise

Excercise I: Foods

Objective: To create interaction between Native and Non-Natives on a non-threatening level.

Time: 15-20 minutes

Setting: Classroom large enough to allow all present to leave seats and move around freely. An empty gym would be fine.

Participants: New personnel, experienced personnel, and Native staff.

Materials needed: Signs from construction paper large enough to be seen without eyestrain wherever participants will move around in the classroom. Signs will list four words in the Eskimo language. The vocabulary will be of varying degrees of familiarity to non-Native staff, so that some of the non-Natives will be able to recognize some words, but not others. I would suggest also that the four words relate to food, since food is universal. I might suggest that a non-Native food unfamiliar to the Eskimo people also be included, such as a Knish, or Matzoh.

MUK-TUK
MIKIGAQ

Procedure: After introducing the facilitating staff and outlining a general format of the workshop (never list things by time. Many non-Natives become distraught when an announced schedule isn't followed. You can list when the workshop begins and ends. If you tell the participants they'll be through at 4:30 and you know they will probably finish at 4, they will love you for letting them out early. If on the other hand, you tell them they'll finish at 4, and you end up releasing them a 4:30, they can become hostile.). Also take this opportunity to touch on such things as bathroom locations, and reassurances that they will have coffee and cigarette breaks. Many non-Natives require these at least twice a day. It would be nice to have some alternative beverage, such as fruit juice or Kool-aide, since some religious denominations do not allow coffee or tea, or soda. Also some health-minded individuals like to get out of the routine of coffee and tea.

Announce to your participants that they will have 15 minutes to complete this assignment--a small group (20 or under) might need only 10 minutes. Explain that the words on the signs (at this point bring out the signs and hang them up, or have them positioned on the opposite side of a blackboard and now wheel the blackboard aound--the important thing is not to let them see the list before so that they respond to you spontaneously.) are different kinds of food and each participant will have to go around the room and ask other participants what these foods are. Non-Natives who have lived in Alaska will be able to answer at least one of the terms, but will be forced to ask the Native

staff for information on the more uncommon foods. This allows an interaction on several levels in a non-threatening way. The use of a non-Native food the Native people have to ask the other participants about will make the non-Natives more secure, and encourage a sharing between groups, rather than only a taking of information.

Closure: After the announced time limit has expired, have participants return to their seats. Spend another 5-10 minutes or so having them talk about their experiences with these foods. You might lead off as a facilitator by setting a respectful format of stating how unusual these foods seem because they're new, but nutritionally and tastewise they're excellent. If a participant gets touchy about soured whalemeat, remind them of how they would describe wine (rotten and fermented vine-fruit) or cheese (animal lactation allowed to spoil and smell).

Excercise II: Fantasy Busride

Objective: Awareness of Hidden Stereotypes

Time: 15-20 minutes

Procedure: In a pleasant, soothing voice explain to the participants you want them to relax and feel comfortable in their seats. Tell them,

"Now I want you to shut your eyes. Relax. Relax. Imagine you're waiting for a bus. You're outside. The weather is fine. You feel the warmth of the sun. There's a slight breeze, so you don't feel too warm. The ground has a few stones and small rocks that you stand on (-Pause-) Here comes the bus. It stops and the door opens. You climb the steps and get on. You sit down. The bus continues. You look out the window. You come to another bus stop. (-Pause-) An Eskimo gets on. The Eskimo walks down the aisle and comes closer. The Eskimo takes the seat next to you. (-Pause-) You speak to one another. (-Pause-) The bus drives on. You pass many things. You pass a grocery store. The windows in the bus are open and you smell summer smells mixed with the smell of gasoline exhaust fumes. The Eskimo speaks to you. (-Pause-) The bus stops. You and the Eskimo get off at the same stop. (-Pause-)

"Now open your eyes. What did the Eskimo look like...describe your mind's image to me (Have them respond) Did you see a man? A woman? A young person? (If an individual is reluctant to say something, ask for a show of hands on the gender and age questions) How was the Eskimo dressed? What did the Eskimo say when you spoke the first time?
What did you talk about the second time?
Where did the two of you get off? "

If there seems to be a reluctance to share what people saw, before you start the excercise, have someone you know and trust agree to step in and share what their images were. This "breaks the ice," and makes others more willing to share.

It is important not to criticize what the participants say. Let them say exactly what they saw. If they begin to answer "I saw a man," then ask them to describe him. Was his hair long? Black? Grey? Did he wear glasses? If you saw him in a Parka, was it Native made? Eddie Bauer? Get them to be specific whenever possible.

The purpose of this excercise is to focus in on the fact that as human beings we all hold certain images in our minds about other groups of people. Usually a non-Native response is "I have no prejudice. I see all children the same, etc." This is bunk, and this excercise, in a non-threatening way allows participants to see that the word Eskimo, (or Indian, or Black, or Asian) conjures up an image, usually based on certain stereotypes. The participants may tend to see the Eskimo gentleman that greeted them when they stepped off the plane. It was always fascinating to me that in doing this excercise with an Indian focus, how the majority of people always imagined an Indian warrior in full battle dress to be stepping on the bus. Once the partcipants reveal what they saw, it frees up the atmosphere to be able to address the issue of stereotypes--where they come from (cartoons, movies, pictures from 1920, etc.) In the next excercise you need to discuss White stereotype too. When I do the Bus Ride myself, I picture the White person as Doris Day.

Excercise III: Stereotype Exploration

Objective : Awareness of Overt Stereotypes

Time: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Large butcher paper for small groups to work with, one sheet for each group of four or five. Enough markers for each small group. Masking tape to secure papers to the wall upon completion.

Procedure: Now that your participants are aware that certain stereotypes do exist and it's healthier to admit that and deal with it than to pretend it doesn't exist, tell them this excercise will have them break into small groups of four or five. Have them count off "1, 2 , 3 , 4," and then all the ones who said "1" are with the first group, the "2's" are with the second group, etc. This is because friends tend to sit together, and you want interaction within the entire group. Counting off will mix everyone into random groups. Tell each group their job in ten minutes is to list at least five (no more than 10) stereotypes of Eskimos and the same number of stereotypes about White people. They are to elect a recorder and that recorder will write on the butcher paper the two lists of stereotypes. This lists should look something like this:

Eskimo	White
Always Late	Pushy
Speaks with an Accent	Doesn't Listen

If the ten minute time limit seems too short (Often non-Natives can't get together and elect a recorder for a while)tell them they have an extra five or ten minutes. Go with the Flow. Be flexible. Observe as a facilitator. Stress that you are not having them do this excercise to expose them as racists, but to pull out for examination some stereotypes that "some" people have about the two groups.

When you see that they are completing their assignments, gather the papers and tape them where all can see them. Have them all return to their seats. Ask the Recorder to go through his or her list to speak on behalf of the small group as to what the statements mean (Usually the group will write down only one word, and this will need expanding to explain it to the whole group). You will notice that several stereotypes tend to show up in each small group.

When all the recorders have explained the list, then as a facilitator, your job is to go over the common stereotypes one at a time. If there is a grain of truth in the stereotypes then explain that grain and stress the danger of generalization. For example, "Always late" as an Eskimo stereotype may come about because of the very real function of "Eskimo Time." (On our reservations, we call it "Indian Time.") In a rural village where one's life is dependent upon the weather, the conditions of the day are more important than a time clock. It's important for outsiders to become aware of this and not feel personally insulted (Many non-Natives take these things aspersonal attacks) when village people come 30 minutes late to a parent conference.

For the White Stereotype, the "Doesn't listen" may be related to a different time perception than the Native's. Many non-Native have been raised to believe everything must happen within a designated space of time. This is the way schools are set up. This designated space of time may have no relationship to reality. Therefore when an agreed upon action (a parent conference) doesn't start upon the agreed upon time (Parents show up 30 minutes "late") the non-Native often feels compelled to "finish" within the designated time, anyway. This does not allow a rapport to develop, or a trust relation to develop. This creates the stereotype that White people don't listen. Some non-Natives in the situation just described rush through the conference, and do not allow the parents the time to express themselves fully. Result: Eskimo Parents think the Teacher doesn't listen; Non-Native Teacher thinks Eskimo Parents can't communicate.

Excercise IV: Bilingual Experience

Objective: To allow English speakers to experience what many Native speakers go through with language problems.

Time: 20 Minutes

Setting: Classroom

Procedure: After the participants have been through the previous excercises, they are probably warmed up to one another and ready for this one. This is not a proper first excercise because it is very anxiety provoking, and will tend to alienate your participants.

Have a facilitator who is fluent in his or her Native language prepare a short teaching lesson. This can be a writing assignment, asking the participants to fill out a form, requesting such information as Name, Address, History of Illness...whatever. It is important to stress to the Native facilitator that he or she use as little body language and gestures as possible to communicate. In other words, if the assignment is to write, the facilitator should not be waving a pencil in front of a paper.

With no English spoken, the facilitator should begin the class session with no warning. After lunch when your group reconvenes would be a good time. He/She should call the session to order and immediately go into the lesson or collection of information. When the participants look confused by a direct question or command, the facilitator should immediate address individuals randomly choosen in the audience. The following should be included:

1. In the Native tongue, ask the participant, "Don't you understand? Are you Deaf? Stupid?"

2. In the Native tongue, repeat your command very slowly.

3. Move to another participant and repeat your command, or a new instruction very loudly.

4. Act as though you're extremely disappointed in them. Continue for at least five minutes in your lesson, or request for specific information.

After 7-10 minutes of the Native Instruction, have the facilitator switch to English. It is imperative that the Native who facilitated also conduct this portion of the presentation. This will lessen tension and any hosility from the audience that might be directed to the Native speaker. The Speaker should ask the following questions and elicit specific responses from the audience:

1. How did you feel when you couldn't understand what I was saying? (Responses will include: "confused, angry, hurt, scared."

2. Did it help you to understand me when I spoke slower?

3. Did it help you to understand me when I spoke louder?

4. Do you understand better now how it feels not to speak a language when you first come to a school, a clinic, or a court, when everyone else expects you to speak the language, and considers you stupid if you don't?

Stress the fact that even if an interpreter is not available for a non-English speaker or partial speaker, that diagrams, gestures and mime can also be used to communicate.

Following these excercises can be informational lectures or presentations that can include factual and documented materials such as history of the community, contact people, resources, treaty information where appropriate, taboos, (some reservations may not want a teacher or medical personnel to interfere with some Native religous restriction (such as intiation rites). Working in conjuction with a local community education committee (JOM, Title IV) might prove useful to see if certain goals have been previously established as to what is acceptable in terms of education and sharing of information. This subject will differ greatly from area to area.

I feel it important to state that I feel this orientation session is only functional as a combination of cognitive and affective approaches. Providing the factual information does very little to let the participants comprehend what it feels like to be powerless, to not be able to communicate, or trapped in a stereotype. It's one thing to say something, it,s another to feel it.

The orientation session can end with an Awareness Presentation that should include the Art of the culture in the sense of poetry, song, dance, or what is considered important to the Native people. If you only discuss historical and anthropological aspects of a people, then they don't exist as human beings for your participants. This is not entertainment. This is a sharing to let your participants know that they are working with a living, very human people that may

view the world a bit differently, but not in an inferior or so-called "primitive" manner. The Art of a culture is the best way of quickly communicating this humanizing element.